

COMPOSTING BASICS

Compost is a rich brown soil-like substance primarily made of decomposed plants and organisms. In addition to producing a valuable soil amendment that adds nutrients and life to your soil, composting can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reduce water pollution. Below are some tips for making compost at home.

WHAT TO COMPOST

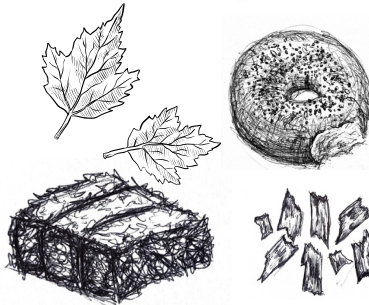
GREENS: moist and nitrogen-rich materials

Fruit and veggie scraps, fresh grass and garden clippings, tea bags, coffee grounds, fresh flowers, etc.



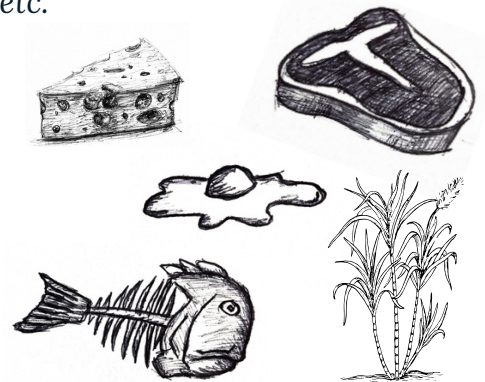
BROWNS: dry and carbon-rich materials

Wood chips, fallen leaves, straw, dry plant material, untreated sawdust, bread, corn cobs, shredded newspaper, etc.



DO NOT COMPOST

Meat, fish, dairy, eggs, invasive weeds, diseased plants, weeds with seeds, plastics, glass, fats, etc.



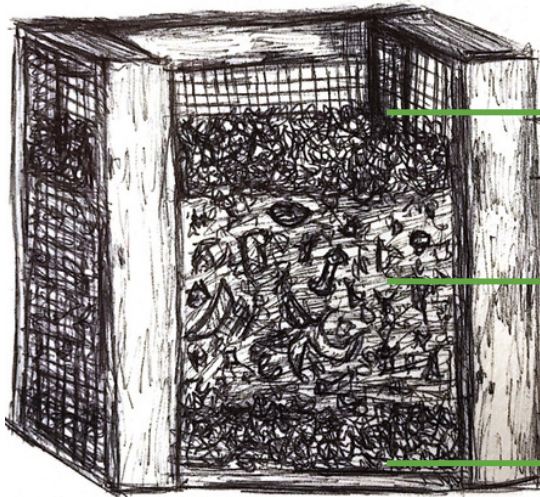
HOW TO COMPOST

- **INGREDIENT COLLECTION:** Gather the proper ratio of ingredients, which is roughly **2 parts "browns" to 1 part "greens"** by volume. Refer to the section above for a compost ingredients recommended at the household scale.
- **INGREDIENT PREPARATION:** Chop bulky ingredients into smaller pieces to speed decomposition. Then thoroughly mix your browns and your greens together. Finally, load the mixture into your bin and cap your pile with a 3-5" layer of browns or partially-finished compost. Capping your pile helps to mitigate pest and smell issues.



- **ACTIVE COMPOST:** Turn your compost pile as desired. While turning compost more frequently speeds up the composting process, you can turn the compost pile as little or as much as desired depending on your capacity.
- **CURING:** Once there are no visible food scraps in your compost pile, set aside your compost to cure, mature, and finish decomposing.
- **APPLICATION:** Apply your finished compost to your garden!

**Producing finished compost can take anywhere from 5 months to one year*



3. Top with a cap of browns or partially finished compost (3-5")

2. A mixture of two parts brown material and one part green material

1. Start with a base of browns or partially finished compost (3-5")

Illustrations by Olivia Golden

MANAGEMENT TIPS

CHECK PILE MOISTURE: Your pile should be moist, but not soggy with a moisture level similar to a well-wrung sponge. If your pile is too moist, add more browns. If it is too dry, add water. This helps mitigate odors and allows decomposers to breakdown the material more quickly.

USE TECHNIQUES THAT PREVENT PESTS: To mitigate pests, make sure that any food scraps are completely covered by a layer of browns, do not add meat or animal products, reinforce compost bins with steel hardware mesh, and turn your pile more frequently to disturb pest activity. Also keep bins away from fences or walls if possible.

TEST COMPOST BEFORE APPLICATION: Once you think your compost is ready, put a few handfuls into a sealed plastic bag or glass jar. Leave the bag of compost out for at least a full day. If the compost has a rotten or chemical-like odor, it needs more time to decompose. If it smells rich and earthy, then it is ready for application.

Sources: Boston Public Works and NYC Compost Project.